



Pagodas originated in India as stupas, or burial tombs, which represented birth, creation, and the center of the universe. Buddhism transformed the stupa into the more spiritual pagoda found atop mountains or along ancient roads as a symbol of reverence for natural elements. Consider how this pagoda remains symbolic of a Japanese garden, which traditionally emphasizes balance among the elements of water, stone, and vegetation.

The Gift of Friendship

This 3,800 pound, 17th century Japanese Pagoda arrived in the Nation's Capital in 1957 as a gift from Mayor Ryoza Hiranuma of Yokohama, Japan. Its parts packed in five shipping crates with no assembly instructions, the pagoda required the staff of the Library of Congress to determine how to reconstruct it accurately. Former District of Columbia Commissioner Renah Camalier arranged for its placement here among the flowering cherry trees Japan donated in 1912.

Graphics provided by the National Park Service

On April 18, 1958, the pagoda was dedicated in continuing recognition of the centennial of the peaceful relations established between the United States and Japan at Yokohama on March 31, 1854 as a special gift from Japan to the United States. That landmark event also is honored by a Washington Monument commemorative stone, a United States Navy Memorial bronze bas-relief, and the Japanese Lantern across the Tidal Basin.

Sky

Wind

Fire

Water

Earth

